



# The Impact of Alcoholism on Children

Alcoholism continues to be a growing problem that not only affects the person with the illness, but also the family members of the alcoholic, especially children. Understanding the effect that alcoholism can have on children is the first step to helping them overcome adversity and reach their full potential. The following are some important facts on alcoholism and the impact it has on children:

## **Alcoholism affects the entire family**

- Living with an alcoholic is stressful for all members of the family.
- Children of alcoholics often lack a healthy home environment in which to develop and grow.

## **A large number of people have an alcoholic in their family**

- Approximately 43 percent of the U.S. adult population has an alcoholic in the family.
- Almost one in five adult Americans lived with an alcoholic as a child.

## **Scientific evidence shows that alcoholism tends to run in families**

- Children of alcoholics are at a higher risk to develop alcoholism.
- Children of alcoholics are more likely to abuse other drugs than are children of non-alcoholics.

## **Alcohol is often associated with violence**

- Perpetrators of violent acts are often under the influence of alcohol.
- Alcohol abuse is evident in a large proportion of child abuse cases.
- Children of alcoholics are more at risk of having behavioral problems and are more likely to be aggressive, disruptive and impulsive.

## **Children of alcoholics experience more physical and mental health problems**

- Health care costs for children of alcoholics are approximately 32 percent higher than children from non-alcoholic families.
- Childhood injuries are more than one and one-half times greater for children of alcoholics than for children from non-alcoholic families.

## **Children of alcoholics often have difficulty in school**

- Children of alcoholics typically score lower on tests measuring verbal ability.
- They may view themselves as failures even if they do well academically.
- They may exhibit poor language and reasoning skills, particularly as compared with those of their peers.

*Adapted with permission from National Association for Children of Alcoholics at <http://www.nacoa.org/>*

# Help for Children of Alcoholics

As previously stated, children of alcoholics often grow up in an environment that impedes their mental and emotional development. The impact of this environment can cause them to perform poorly in school, have problems with interpersonal relationships, and have difficulty coping with day-to-day situations. These children also run an increased risk of getting into trouble and of developing alcohol and other drug problems. But with the right support from a caring adult, these children can succeed despite their circumstances. As a friend, relative, or other involved adult, you can make a difference to these children. Here are some ways you can make a positive impact in the life of a child of an alcoholic:

- **Be a good listener**—Just being there to listen and offer encouraging words will help the child understand that they are not the cause of the alcoholism, and that they cannot control it. Reinforce the child's positive qualities and tell them how special they are;
- **Get them interested in an activity**—This can be a hobby or sport, or even taking care of a pet. This type of positive engagement will help the child develop self-confidence and improve their self-esteem;
- **Be available for them**—Being there on a consistent basis demonstrates to a child of an alcoholic that adults can be trusted and counted on for support; and
- **Encourage them to ask for help**—Children of alcoholics may be reluctant to ask for help. Help them understand that it is okay to ask for help. Be responsive when they do ask for help, and assist them with resources for getting the help they need.

## Remember . . .

Your Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is available to you and your eligible dependents 24 hours a day, seven days a week. All services are confidential and provided at no cost to you. As part of your EAP, you now have access to MagellanAssist. Visit today at <http://www.dpa.ca.gov/benefits/other/eap/Assist.shtm>

# Resources

## Below are resources you might consider when helping children of alcoholics:

- National Association for Children of Alcoholics (NACoA)  
*Phone:* 888-554-COAS  
*Web:* [www.health.org/nacoa/nacoa@erols.com](http://www.health.org/nacoa/nacoa@erols.com)
- National Association for Native American Children of Alcoholics (NANACoA)  
*Phone:* 800-322-5601
- National Black Alcoholism Council (NBAC)  
*Phone:* 202-296-2696
- National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence (NCADD)  
*Phone:* 800-NCA-CALL  
*Web:* [www.ncadd.org](http://www.ncadd.org)

## Self-Help Groups for Children of Alcoholics

- Al-Anon Family Group Headquarters, Inc.  
*Phone:* 1-888-4AL-ANON  
*Web:* [www.al-anon.org](http://www.al-anon.org)
- Adult Children of Alcoholics (ACA/ACoA)  
*Web:* [www.adultchildren.org](http://www.adultchildren.org)

## Alcohol/Drug Prevention Information for Volunteers, Professionals, and General Public

- Children of Alcoholics Foundation  
*Phone:* 212-595-5810, ext. 7760  
*Web:* [www.coaf.org](http://www.coaf.org)
- National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information (NCADI)  
*Phone:* 800-729-6686  
*Web:* [www.health.org](http://www.health.org)